CABINET DOCUMENT
Ministry Document Number: 2005
-01
January 26, 2005

MINISTER:

Honourable Wendy McMahon, Minister of State for Women's and Seniors' Services
Honourable Murray Coell, Minister, Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services

TITLE:

Enhanced supports and safety for women escaping violence and abuse

ISSUE:
Through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Government provides $33 million annually for direct services to women and their dependent children who have experienced violence and abuse.

A total of $12,553,000 will fund new services and enhance existing services that will increase the personal safety of British Columbians by addressing issues of violence against women and children who have witnessed violence and abuse. This increases government's expenditures in these program areas by 33 per cent.

This funding supports the goals of Government's Strategic Plan 2002-/03-2004/05, specifically:

- A supportive social fabric;
- A strong and vibrant provincial economy; and
- Safe, healthy communities

The services this funding will support are reflected in the annual service plans for the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services. No change of mandate for the programs is required.

RECOMMENDATION:
Approve $12.553 million in new annual funding for direct essential services for women and children.

BACKGROUND:

Violence against women and children has a major impact on British Columbia society. It exacts a high economic cost, causes serious health and social problems and has a long-term consequence on the women and children who are its victims and witnesses.

The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services funds and manages programs that aim to reduce violence and help survivors cope with its effects. These programs include: shelter programs (transition houses, safe homes and second stage housing), counselling programs for women who have experienced abuse and for children who have witnessed abuse, and prevention initiatives.

Benefits of this request include:

- Increasing personal safety with enhanced direct essential services and programs that keep women and their children safe and help them deal with the effect of violence on their lives;
- Ensuring children heal from the effects of witnessing violence and do not become abusers themselves; and
- Making communities safer through prevention of violence initiatives.

$5.1 million will help women who are escaping violence and abuse to be safer and more secure by supporting 24/ accessibility at transition houses. This funding will also increase safe shelter by adding beds to existing transition houses, supporting beds in new transition houses and funding new safe home programs.

$600,000 will provide emotional support for children staying in transition houses to help them cope with trauma. This will help children resume a more stable routine as quickly as possible.

$1.6 million will go toward expanding outreach work across the province for women who need support. This initiative will fill a critical need in rural and remote communities. Outreach services also help to break the cycle of violence through violence prevention initiatives taken into the community

$2 million will expand and enhance Stopping the Violence and Children Who Witness Abuse Counselling programs. Waitlists will be addressed and new services will be offered in identified communities where service is needed.

$700,000 will provide training for front-line workers dealing with women and children and the complex issues related to violence.

$2 million will support new initiatives to address violence against women, with a focus on issues affecting seniors, aboriginal women, immigrants, visible minorities and women with disabilities in order to break the cycle of violence.

$500,000 will provide for a new volunteer-based mentoring program to ensure that women, who have never been in the workforce, or who are entering it after a long absence, have support, as a key way to improve independence.

FISCAL MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS:

New funding of $12.553 million annually in the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services' budget.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: Approve
Option 2: Do not approve

SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS:

No legislation or regulation is required.

New services will be tendered on the BC Bid website.

LEGISLATION REQUIRED: None

CONSULTATIONS:

Ministers have met with the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses and the BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs on a number of occasions.

Ministers McMahon continues the work of her colleague Minister Chong in travelling the province, visiting transition houses and meeting with Stop the Violence and Children Who Witness Abuse Counsellors.

Transition house programs and counselling programs have been consulted through an annual budget and expenditure reporting exercise in the Stopping the Violence Branch.

Counselling programs have been consulted through a program evaluation exercise done in 2004.

Public Consultation
None required.

Inter-Ministry, Inter-Agency, Inter-governmental

- Ministers have met with the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses and the BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs on a number of occasions.

RECOMMENDED DECISION:

Option 1: approve

SIGNATURE:

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Minister's Signature Date